



PO BOX 201706  
Helena, MT 59620-1706  
(406) 444-3064  
FAX (406) 444-3036

## Economic Affairs Interim Committee

### 65th Montana Legislature

#### SENATE MEMBERS

GORDON VANCE--Chair  
EDWARD BUTTREY  
TOM FACEY  
LEA WHITFORD

#### HOUSE MEMBERS

NATE MCCONNELL--Vice Chair  
MARK NOLAND  
VINCE RICCI  
SHARON STEWART-PEREGOY

#### COMMITTEE STAFF

PATRICIA MURDO, Lead Staff  
JAMESON WALKER, Staff Attorney  
FONG HOM, Secretary

February 7, 2018

DRAFT

Phyllis K. Fong, Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Inspector General  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington DC 20250

sent via email

Dear Inspector General Fong:

The Economic Affairs Interim Committee of the Montana Legislature has been hearing from Montana meat processors about concerns related to both state and federal inspections, inspections that are based on Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) rules. The bipartisan Committee has voted to send a letter to you as a way of providing additional support for the state Congressional delegation's request for an external investigation to address allegations that date back to 2005 about meat inspections in Montana. Among other concerns is an indication that small processors may be treated differently than larger processors.

Although the Committee understands that personnel matters may not be aired to the public, the public has a right to know how FSIS regulations are being implemented by both federal and state inspectors and whether these inspections are being done uniformly. The Committee anticipates that a followup investigation as requested by the Congressional delegation would help to assure Montana citizens, and specifically Montana meat processors, that FSIS is meeting its goal of assuring safe, processed meat.

Thank you for your attention to the Congressional delegation and to our request.

Sincerely,

Sen. Gordon Vance  
EAIC Presiding Officer

Rep. Nate McConnell  
EAIC Vice Presiding Officer